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EIU Faculty Share Nearly \$16,000 in IDNR Grant Money for Research

Oct-28-2005

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has awarded eight Eastern Illinois University faculty members a total of nearly \$16,000 for scientific research.

Robert “Bud” Fischer, biological sciences, will use \$2,000 of the grant money for his project, “The Effectiveness of Artificial Riffles in Illinois Streams.”

According to Fischer, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, large expanses of land in the Midwest were drained for agricultural activities. This also caused the loss of woody debris and gravel deposits which, in turn, caused fine and coarse cobble that create natural riffles to be replaced by a fine sediment.

As a result, the IDNR installed 30 artificial riffles on eight different streams between 2000 and 2003. According to Fischer, he and a group of both graduate and undergraduate students will investigate the effectiveness of these artificial riffles as an aquatic habitat restoration technique.

Tom Over and Vince Gutowski, from EIU’s geology/geography department, joined forces with Henry Owen and Janice Coons, biological sciences, to research the “Adaptive Mechanisms of *Lesquerella ludoviciana* (silvery bladderpod) to Survive Marginal Conditions of Illinois Sand Prairies.”

The plant in question (a small wildflower) is found only in one location in Illinois – in the sand prairie at the Henry Allan Gleason Nature Preserve in Mason County. It had been placed on the state endangered species list and, because of its rarity, researchers want to understand the environmental conditions in which it can thrive.

The EIU project team has already monitored the population, soil moisture, temperature and sand movement at the Mason County site for a few years, and has performed tests of the population’s seed production and germination. This most recent IDNR grant of \$1,996 will provide for additional instrumentation to be installed at the site to monitor light and soil water potential, a measure of the energy required by a plant to obtain water from the soil. These measurements will help to quantify the light and water requirements of the population and, therefore, will provide useful information for the protection and management of this endangered species.

Other EIU grant recipients and their projects include:

- Janice Coons, Nancy Coutant and Brent Todd, biological sciences, \$7,980 for the development of an “Aid to Restoration Featuring Fruits, Seeds and Seedlings for Illinois Prairie Plants” Web site. The site would be a comprehensive description resource with detailed information relative to Illinois prairie plants at all stages of development, focusing on fruits, seeds and seedlings.
- Janice Coons and Nancy Coutant, biological sciences, \$1,997 for “Workshops for the Illinois Nursery Industry to Promote Use of Native Plants in Landscaping.”
- Zhiwei Liu, biological sciences, \$1,968 for “Gall Wasp Species Diversity in the Prairies of Central and Southern Illinois.” Twenty-seven prairies and glades owned/managed by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission will be surveyed for diversity of this species group.